“Nikki Craft Sees Links Among Issues” — OUT!, February 1986

Nikki Craft Archival Project — Press Coverage

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Nikki Craft sees links among issues

By Sue Burke

OSHKOSH—The rampage started last October in Iowa, and has spread to at least five states. Women and men are entering bookstores to tear up *Hustler* and *Penthouse* magazines.

Sometimes they commit vandalism. Once they burned *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione in effigy. Often they are arrested, jailed, and fined.

The “Rampage Against *Penthouse* and *Hustler*, has been organized by a group with a self-given nickname of Outlaws for Social Responsibility, and a formal name of Citizens for Media Responsibility Without Law. (The name is intended to distinguish the group from the Moral Majority's pro-censorship Citizens for Decency through Law.)

The Outlaws ringleader is Nikki Craft. She wants you to look at the magazines she tears up. “Hiding it (through censorship) would short-circuit the process of discussion of what it is,” she said. “People need to examine it. Men who read it need to be seen as bigots. We want a society that will not tolerate making violence and pain look attractive.”

Her group is in favor of nudity, sensuality, homosexuality, abortion, and unlimited freedom of the press. It opposes objectification and violent pornography.

The rampage started five years ago, she said, when *Hustler* ran its “women as meat” issue, featuring a cover photo of a woman being ground into hamburger. The rampage was renewed and extended to *Penthouse* after its December, 1984, issue, which included pictures of Asian women tied up, hung from trees, and hurled onto rocks, all in sexually provocative positions and clothing.

Penthouse Publications added fuel to the rampage with its new magazine, *New Look*. Its premier issue in May, 1985, alternated photo documentaries of military commando units or big-game hunters with photos of women with ropes trussed tightly into their genitals, women being threatened with weapons, and more hanging Asian women.

“It's a real attempt to legitimize violent pornography,” Craft said. “It's too much to bear that these kinds of profits are made off women,” and demands “corporate and individual responsibility” for “the multi-billion dollar pornography industry [that]disseminates hateful propaganda that results in real harm to real women.”

Craft moved to Oshkosh last year to work for the Naturist Society, which promotes nudity. A ceramic artist by training, she says in a soft Texas accent that her career as a “volunteer social servant” for social change may have been inspired by her own rape 20 years ago at age 15 at knifepoint. Police refused to take action against the man, who eventually raped seven other women and served only one year in jail.

One of Craft's first efforts was the 1974 founding of Women Armed for Self-Protection in Dallas, Tex., which taught women how to use guns. “Men and women were created equal,” read one of the group's posters, “and Smith & Wesson makes damn sure it stays that way.”

Craft went on to projects that protested the B-1 bomber, published the names of rapists in Dallas County, and fought Texas vice squad officers to show films from the New York Women's Film Festival.

In 1980, while attending the University of California at Santa Cruz, she was arrested for destroying a showing of ten photographs called “The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheat Murders.” In the supposedly humorous photos, nude female victims were splattered with vast amounts of chocolate syrup to depict blood.

Craft, commenting that “blacks would not tolerate ‘humorous’ prints of Klan lynchings,” tore up the prints and doused them with chocolate syrup, calling her work “The Incredible Stack O'Prints Mutilation.” Craft was nominated for a campus award by her arresting officer, a college official, and 400 students.

While living in Santa Cruz, Craft led colorful protests of the Miss California beauty pageant and anti-nudity laws.

At the pageants, protesters threw raw meat on stage, poured blood outside, and designed a float featuring a woman who wore 35 pounds of lunch meat under a banner reading “Judge meat not women.”

Particular targets for Craft were Kellogg's Corn Flakes and Nestle Crunch Bars. Both products sponsor the pageant.

She said the pageants, run by the Jaycees, are “just a front to find the women that they need to fit their narrow mold.” The mold is so narrow, she said, that in 10 years, Miss California has had only a one-inch variation in her figure. That narrowness encourages eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia—self-starvation and forced vomiting—to achieve the perfect figure.

Nikki Craft demonstrates bulimia at a Myth California protest of beauty contests.

To highlight that, Craft, crowned as “Myth California,” threw up corn flakes and chocolate bars, satirizing it as a “small price to pay” to fit “the mold of white womanhood.”

Men not only try to control how women look, she said, but try to control what women can do with their looks, including when they can and cannot wear clothing. That's why she promotes nudity.

Craft was arrested in 1982 for sunbathing topless on a beach. This led to series of protests, on both the West and East Costs, and to the formation of the “Cross Your Heart Support Network.” The network organized 100 topless women and men for a rally in downtown Santa Cruz on the day of the city's annual Fiesta Day Parade.

According to Cross Your Heart Support Network literature, “Pornography's eight billion-dollar a year industry requires strict adherence to puritanical ethics. To market the torture, rape, and maiming of women in the name of free speech and entertainment requires first and foremost that women's bodies be viewed as ‘forbidden fruit.’”

Another Craft project, the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade and its men's auxiliary, has awarded merchants who sell *Hustler* magazine with an ejaculating penis sculpture for “acting to protect men's right to rape.” The penis award “works wonders for keeping us from being aligned with the right wing,” Craft said.

She stressed that her tactics and philosophy are not the only possibilities. “We need a lot of approaches,” Craft said, voicing respect for the work of Andrea Dworkin and Katherine A. McKinnon, who favor outlawing violent pornography.

Craft said their work has been important because it has established violent pornography as a violation of women's right to safety rather than as obscenity or lewdness.

Craft offered few comments on the issue of gay male pornography, saying it's not my place” to tell gay men what to do,” she said. “That's [illegible] territory.” But she cautioned that pornography for women ranges from fantasy to horrible reality, and urged gay men to be careful not to develop a commercialized fetish of violence and sex.

Craft had advice for activists. Oppression is so complex that to complete action on all of it is “immobilizing.” Instead, she said, “take an area and work on it.”

She advised activists to [illegible] document their work. Her actions intentionally appeal to the media so that the acts will be recorded, and women and men—and if the media won't be there, she has sometimes hired her own photographer.

“My responsibility is to push society even as little as I can in the right direction,” Craft said. “We can't make people responsible for what they do.

Dressed as Myth California, Nikki Craft is arrested during protests outside the Miss California Pageant. She was once arrested for misuse of corn flakes—she flung the pageant's sponsor's products like confetti at spectators of the Myth California parade.

This is a full-page profile by journalist Sue Burke, published in OUT! magazine, February 1986, page 12. Shared to this archive by Donovan Cleckley from his own physical collection. It is one of the broadest single pieces of contemporaneous press coverage of Craft's activism found to date — not a report on a single action, but an attempt by an independent journalist to trace the connective thread across nearly a decade and a half of her work.

What the Article Documents

Burke situates Craft as the named “ringleader” of the Outlaws for Social Responsibility (formal name: Media Responsibility Without Law), organizers of the “Rampage Against Penthouse and Hustler” — a movement that had by 1986 spread to at least five states, with activists entering bookstores to tear up magazines, burning Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione in effigy, and facing arrest. The piece traces Craft's activism back through the 1974 founding of Women Armed for Self-Protection (WASP) in Dallas, KGWP's publication of rapists' names in Dallas County, direct action against the B-1 bomber, and confrontation with Texas vice squad officers over screenings from the New York Women's Film Festival.

It documents, independently, the 1980 UC Santa Cruz arrest for destroying a display of “The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheat Murders” — photographs of nude women posed as murder victims, doused in chocolate syrup — and records a striking detail: Craft was nominated for a campus award over the incident by her own arresting officer, a college official, and 400 students.

The article covers the Miss California pageant protests in detail: the “Myth California” counter-pageant, the corn-flakes-and-chocolate demonstration highlighting eating disorders encouraged by narrow beauty standards, and targeted campaigns against pageant sponsors Kellogg's and Nestle. It documents the Cross Your Heart Support Network's 1982 rally of 100 topless women and men in Santa Cruz following Craft's own topless-sunbathing arrest, and the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade's satirical “penis award” to merchants who sold Hustler.

A Documented Origin Detail — With a Discrepancy Worth Flagging

Burke's article states that Craft's career as a “volunteer social servant” for social change “may have been inspired by her own rape 20 years ago at age 15 at knifepoint. Police refused to take action against the man, who eventually raped seven other women and served only one year in jail.”

This is consistent in shape with the account documented elsewhere in this archive — disbelief by authorities, a later-documented pattern of repeat assault by the same man — but differs in specific numbers from other sourced accounts: the Madness Network News metadata records the assailant as later convicted of assaulting three other girls; Mary Ziegler's Beyond Abortion describes him as convicted of assaulting “several” minor girls. This 1986 account gives seven, and states only one year of jail time, without specifying what he was actually convicted of. Per this project's standing practice, this discrepancy is flagged rather than silently resolved. All three accounts may be describing the same underlying case with different levels of detail available to each source at the time; alternatively, Burke's figure may reflect what Craft told her directly in 1986, closer in time to the events than either of the other two sources. Worth Craft's own review to determine which figure, if any, should be treated as canonical.

Craft's own review (2026): she believes Burke's figure may reflect independent research Burke did on her own \ u2014 the man was, in Craft's understanding, a serial rapist and likely a serial killer, who killed at least one woman and later died on death row, though not by execution; the cause of his death is unknown to her. Craft's personal, firsthand knowledge extends only to three other girls he assaulted around the same period as her own assault. It is plausible Burke uncovered a fuller arrest record independently in 1986 that was not part of Craft's own direct knowledge at the time.

A Second Self-Documentation Data Point

“She advised activists to be as visible as possible and document their work,” Burke writes, quoting Craft directly: her actions “intentionally appeal to the media so that the acts will be recorded by all women and men — and if the media won't be there, she has sometimes hired her own photographer.” This is independent, contemporaneous, 1986 confirmation of the same instinct for deliberate self-documentation traced elsewhere in this archive back to a five-year-old's dated drawing of a dead bird — stated here, at the height of her activist career, as an explicit organizing philosophy rather than a private habit.

A Boundary, Stated Plainly

The article records Craft declining to comment substantively on gay male pornography, telling Burke it was “not my place” to direct that conversation — while cautioning gay men against a commercialized fetishization of violence and sex. In a movement frequently characterized by outsiders as uniformly anti-pornography without nuance, this is a documented instance of Craft drawing her own line deliberately, in her own words, in 1986.

A 2026 Update to the 1986 Strategy

Craft's 1986 organizing philosophy, quoted earlier in this piece, was to make her actions deliberately appeal to media so they would be recorded \u2014 hiring her own photographer when the press wouldn't show up. Forty years later, her view has changed: she no longer performs for media at all. In her own words, given while reviewing this document in 2026: the connections between the bird drawing, hiring her own photographer for the Stack O'Wheat action, and the media-courting tactics of the 1980s all trace one continuous instinct \u2014 but media, she now believes, is \u201cnot even worth manipulating\u201d anymore. She documents her own work directly instead, media coverage or not. \u201cMedia be damned,\u201d in her words. \u201cIt's a lost cause.\u201d

Compiled by Claude (Anthropic) in collaboration with Nikki Craft. Newspaper clipping shared by Donovan Cleckley. Part of the Nikki Craft Archival Project. July 13, 2026.